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**United States Department of Agriculture**  
**AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE**  
**SERVICE AND REGULATORY ANNOUNCEMENTS NO. 114**

**OFFICIAL UNITED STATES STANDARDS FOR GRADES  
OF VEAL AND CALF CARCASSES**

(Title 7, Ch. I, Pt. 53, Sections 53.107-53.111 of the Code of Federal Regulations)

The following is a reprint of the official United States standards for the grades of veal and calf carcasses heretofore promulgated by the Secretary of Agriculture under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (60 Stat. 1087; 7 U. S. C. 1621 et seq.), as amended by Public Law 272, 84th Congress. The standards are reprinted with amendments effective October 1, 1956.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDARDS**

The official standards for grades of veal and calf carcasses were initially promulgated on July 12, 1928. The standards were amended in October 1940 (Amendment No. 1 to S. R. A. 114) by changing the grade designations Medium and Common to Commercial and Utility, respectively. Beginning September 18, 1942, pursuant to Amendment 5, Maximum Price Regulation 169 of the Office of Price Administration, the use of the grade specified as Prime was suspended (Amendment No. 2 to S. R. A. 114); however, its use was restored as an official grade on December 3, 1946 (Amendment No. 3 to S. R. A. 114). During that period all veal and calf carcasses that met the specifications of the Prime grade were identified with and graded as Choice.

In March 1951, the official standards were amended (Amendment No. 4 to S. R. A. 114) by combining the Prime and Choice grades and designating them as Prime, renaming the Good grade as Choice, and dividing the Commercial grade into two grades and designating that segment included in the top half of the grade as Good while retaining the Commercial grade designation for the remaining portion of the grade. The Utility and Cull grade specifications were not changed. This same amendment also provided for reflecting the minimum requirements for each grade, and also clarified the method for differentiating between veal and calf.

A fifth amendment to the official standards (Amendment No. 5 to S. R. A. 114) in October 1956, changed the grade name Commercial to Standard and also made certain changes in the phrasing of the standards designed to facilitate their interpretation and to conform them with color photographs used by the Department of Agriculture to illustrate the minimum requirements of the respective grades.

**DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN VEAL, CALF, AND BEEF CARCASSES**

Differentiation between veal, calf, and beef carcasses is made primarily on the basis of the color of the lean, although such factors

as texture of the lean; character of the fat; color, shape, size, and ossification of the bones and cartilages; and the general contour of the carcass are also given consideration. Typical veal carcasses have a grayish pink color of lean that is very smooth and velvety in texture and they also have a slightly soft, pliable character of fat and narrow, very red rib bones. By contrast, typical calf carcasses have a grayish red color of lean, a harder, flakier type of fat, and somewhat wider rib bones with less pronounced evidences of red color. Calf carcasses with maximum maturity for their class have lean flesh that is usually not more than moderately red in color, their rib bones usually have a small amount of red and have only a slight tendency toward flatness, and such carcasses are not noticeably "spreadly" or "barrelly" in contour. Such carcasses, when split, have cartilages on the ends of the chine bones that are entirely cartilaginous, there is cartilage in evidence on all vertebrae of the spinal column, and the sacral vertebrae show distinct separation. Carcasses with evidences of more advanced maturity than described in this paragraph are classified as beef.

### CLASSES OF VEAL AND CALF CARCASSES

Class determination is based on the apparent sex condition of the animal at time of slaughter. Hence, there are three classes of veal and calf carcasses--steers, heifers, and bulls. While recognition may sometimes be given to these different classes on the market, especially in the case of calf carcasses that are approaching beef in maturity, the differences between the various classes are so slight that accurate description of them is impractical. Therefore, the grade standards which follow are equally applicable to all classes of veal and calf carcasses.

### APPLICATION OF STANDARDS

Veal and calf carcasses are graded on a composite evaluation of three general grade factors--conformation, finish, and quality. These factors are concerned with the proportions of the various wholesale cuts and the proportions of fat, lean, and bone in the carcass and the quality of the lean. Carcasses qualifying for any particular grade may vary with respect to their relative development of the three grade factors and there will be carcasses which qualify for a particular grade, some of the characteristics of which may be typical of another grade. Because it is impractical to describe the nearly limitless numbers of such recognizable combinations of characteristics, the standards for each grade describe only carcasses which have a relatively similar development of conformation, finish, and quality and which are also representative of the lower limit of each grade.

The quality of the lean flesh is determined from the development of its color, texture, firmness, and marbling, as observed in a cut surface, in relation to the apparent maturity of the animal from which the carcass was produced. In grading carcasses or sides in which direct observation of these characteristics is not possible, quality of the lean is evaluated indirectly from its apparent color and general firmness together with the quantity and quality of certain fat deposits, all in relation to the apparent evidences of maturity. The fat deposits considered in this indirect evaluation of quality, in descending order of their importance, are as follows: (1) The fat



intermingled within the lean between the ribs called "feathering", (2) the streaking of fat within and upon the inside flank muscles, (3) the fat covering over the diaphragm muscle or "skirt", (4) the covering of external fat, and (5) the kidney and pelvic fat. The standards for each grade specify only one general level of development of the quality-indicating characteristics described in this paragraph, and these characteristics apply only to carcasses which are typical in maturity for their class. In order to qualify for a specific grade, carcasses with evidences of more advanced maturity than typical for their class are required to have a slightly greater development of these characteristics than described. Conversely, carcasses with evidences of less maturity than typical for their class may qualify for a given grade with a slightly lesser development of these characteristics. Because of the greater range in maturity among calf carcasses, a somewhat greater variation in these evidences of quality is present among carcasses within each grade of that class than is present among carcasses within each grade of veal.

While the standards describe rather definite degrees of external finish and of kidney and pelvic fat for each grade of veal and calf, consideration of variations in the quantities of these fats is restricted almost entirely to carcasses of the lower grades which have a development of external and kidney and pelvic fats that is substantially different from their development of feathering, fat streaking in the inside flank muscles, and fat covering over the skirt. In such carcasses, variation in the quantities of external fat and of kidney and pelvic fats is given a very limited consideration in the evaluation of quality. In the higher grades, particularly the higher grades of calf, variation in the quantities of these fats is given no consideration. The quality or firmness of the external and kidney and pelvic fats, however, is given consideration as an indicator of quality in all grades.

Inasmuch as all carcasses do not have a comparable development of conformation and quality, examples of the extent to which superiority in quality may compensate for deficiencies in conformation, and vice versa, are indicated for each grade.

The standards for veal and calf carcasses contained herein and those for beef carcasses contained in the Official United States Standards for Grades of Carcass Beef (S. R. A. - A. M. S. 99) together provide the basis for grading carcasses within the full range of maturity of the bovine species. Although the grade standards for this full range of maturity are contained in three separate standards, it is the intent that the three standards be considered as a continuous series. Therefore, in determining the grade requirements for a carcass which has a degree of maturity that is not typical of that specified in one of the three standards, it is necessary to interpolate between the standards for the kind of carcass (veal, calf, or beef) being graded and the standards for the kind of carcass which is most closely adjacent to it in maturity.

## **SPECIFICATIONS FOR OFFICIAL UNITED STATES STANDARDS FOR GRADES OF VEAL CARCASSES**

### **PRIME**

A veal carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Prime grade is blocky and compact and tends to be broad in

proportion to its length. It tends to be thickly fleshed and has a rather plump, full, well-rounded appearance. Rounds tend to be thick and bulging. Loin and back tend to be full and plump. Shoulders and breast tend to be thick.

There is usually a thin covering of firm fat over the rump, loin, and back which also usually extends over most of the tops of the shoulders and outsides of the legs. There is a modest amount of extensive feathering between the ribs, a modest amount of fat streaking in the inside flank muscles, and a modest covering of fat over the skirt. The flanks are thick, full and firm. Kidney and pelvic fat is firm and usually is moderately abundant. The cut surface of the lean is moderately firm, fine-textured, grayish pink in color, and velvety to sight and touch.

To qualify for the Prime grade a carcass must possess the minimum requirements for evidences of quality regardless of the extent that its conformation may exceed the minimum requirements for Prime. However, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Prime grade may compensate, on an equal basis and without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Prime as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Prime grade may have conformation equivalent to the mid-point of the Choice grade and remain eligible for Prime.

#### CHOICE

A veal carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Choice grade is moderately blocky and compact and tends to be moderately broad in proportion to its length. It is slightly thick-fleshed and has a slightly plump appearance. Rounds are slightly thick and bulging. Loin and back tend to be moderately full and plump. Shoulders and breast tend to be moderately thick.

There is usually a very thin covering of moderately firm fat over the loin and back which also usually partially covers the tops of the shoulders and outsides of the legs. There is a slight amount of feathering between the ribs, a slight quantity of fat streaking in the inside flank muscles, and a slight covering of fat over the skirt. The flanks are moderately thick, full, and firm. There is usually a moderate quantity of kidney and pelvic fat which is moderately firm. The cut surface of the lean is slightly firm, fine-textured, grayish pink in color, and slightly moist to sight and touch.

To qualify for the Choice grade a carcass must possess the minimum requirements for evidences of quality regardless of the extent that its conformation may exceed the minimum requirements for Choice. However, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Choice grade may compensate, on an equal basis and without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Choice as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Choice grade may have conformation equivalent to the mid-point of the Good grade and remain eligible for Choice.

#### GOOD

A veal carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Good grade tends to be slightly blocky and compact and tends to



be slightly broad in proportion to its length. It tends to be slightly thin-fleshed and has little or no evidence of plumpness. Loin, back, and rounds are slightly thin and nearly flat. Shoulders and breast tend to be slightly thin.

There is usually an extremely thin covering of fat over the back and loin but usually practically no fat covering over the tops of the shoulders or outsides of the legs. There are traces of feathering between the ribs, traces of fat streaking in the inside flank muscles, and traces of fat covering over the skirt. The flanks are slightly thick and firm. There is usually a small amount of kidney and pelvic fat. The cut surface of the lean is fine-textured but slightly soft, slightly dark grayish pink in color, and rather moist to sight and touch.

A carcass that has conformation equivalent to at least the mid-point of the Good grade may have evidences of quality equivalent to the minimum for the upper third of the Standard grade and remain eligible for Good. Also, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Good grade may compensate, without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Good on the basis of a half grade superior quality for a third of a grade of deficient conformation as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Good grade may have conformation equivalent to the minimum of the upper third of the Standard grade and remain eligible for Good.

#### STANDARD

A veal carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Standard grade is thinly fleshed and is rangy, angular, and narrow in relation to its length. Rounds are thin and tapering and slightly concave. Loin and back are depressed. Shoulders and breast are thin.

External fat covering is usually limited to very thin patches over the loin and back and a small quantity of fat around the base of the tail. There is practically no feathering between the ribs, practically no streaking of fat in the inside flank muscles, and practically no covering of fat over the skirt. The flanks are thin and slightly soft. There is usually a slight amount of kidney and pelvic fat. The cut surface of the lean is fine-textured but moderately soft and moist and slightly dark grayish pink in color.

A carcass that has conformation equivalent to at least the mid-point of the Standard grade may have evidences of quality equivalent to the minimum for the upper third of the Utility grade and remain eligible for Standard. Also, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Standard grade may compensate, without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Standard on the basis of a half grade superior quality for a third of a grade of deficient conformation as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Standard grade may have conformation equivalent to the minimum of the upper third of the Utility grade and remain eligible for Standard.

#### UTILITY

A veal carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Utility grade is very thinly fleshed and is very rangy and angular

and very narrow in relation to its length. Rounds are very thin and moderately concave. Loin and back are very depressed. Shoulders and breast are very thin.

There is usually practically no external fat covering except for very small deposits around the base of the tail and over the outsides of the shoulders. There is no feathering between the ribs, no fat streaking in the inside flank muscles, and no covering of fat over the skirt. The flanks are soft and very thin. There is usually only a very slight amount of kidney and pelvic fat. The cut surface of the lean is soft and moist and dark grayish pink in color.

A carcass that has conformation equivalent to at least the mid-point of the Utility grade may have evidences of quality equivalent to the minimum for the upper third of the Cull grade and remain eligible for Utility. Also, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Utility grade may compensate, without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Utility on the basis of a half grade superior quality for a third of a grade of deficient conformation as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Utility grade may have conformation equivalent to the minimum of the upper third of the Cull grade and remain eligible for Utility.

#### **CULL**

A typical Cull grade veal carcass is extremely thin-fleshed and is extremely rangy and angular and extremely narrow in relation to its length. Rounds are concave and extremely thin. Loin and back are extremely depressed. Shoulders and breast are extremely thin.

There is usually no external fat covering and no feathering between the ribs nor streaking of fat in the inside flank muscles. The flanks are extremely thin and very soft. There is usually practically no kidney or crotch fat. The cut surface of the lean is very soft and very moist and dark grayish pink in color.

### **SPECIFICATIONS FOR OFFICIAL UNITED STATES STANDARDS FOR GRADES OF CALF CARCASSES**

#### **PRIME**

A calf carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Prime grade is blocky and compact and tends to be broad in proportion to its length. It is thickly fleshed and has a plump, full, well-rounded appearance. Rounds tend to be thick and bulging. Loin and back tend to be full and plump. Shoulders and breast tend to be thick.

There is usually a slightly thick covering of very firm fat over the back, loin, and rump which also usually completely covers the tops of the shoulders and outsides of the legs. There is a moderate amount of very extensive feathering between the ribs, a moderate quantity of fat streaking in the inside flank muscles, and a moderate covering of fat over the skirt. The flanks are very thick, full, and firm. Kidney and pelvic fat is very firm and usually is abundant. The cut surface of the lean is firm, fine-textured, light grayish red in color, and velvety to sight and touch. There is a small amount of marbling in the rib eye muscle. Calf carcasses which are approaching beef in maturity and development will have a moderate amount of marbling.



To qualify for the Prime grade a carcass must possess the minimum requirements for evidences of quality regardless of the extent that its conformation may exceed the minimum requirements for Prime. However, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Prime grade may compensate, on an equal basis and without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Prime as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Prime grade may have conformation equivalent to the mid-point of the Choice grade and remain eligible for Prime.

#### CHOICE

A calf carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Choice grade tends to be moderately blocky and compact and tends to be moderately broad in proportion to its length. It tends to be moderately thick-fleshed and has a moderately plump appearance. Rounds tend to be moderately thick and bulging. Loin and back tend to be moderately full and plump. Shoulders and breast tend to be moderately thick.

There is usually a moderately thin covering of firm fat over the loin and back which also usually covers most of the tops of the shoulders and outsides of the legs. There is a small amount of rather extensive feathering between the ribs, a small quantity of fat streaking in the inside flank muscles, and a small amount of fat covering over the skirt. The flanks are thick, full, and firm. Kidney and pelvic fat is firm and usually is moderately abundant. The cut surface of the lean is moderately firm, fine-textured, and light grayish red in color and there are traces of marbling in the rib eye. Calf carcasses approaching beef in maturity and development have a slight amount of marbling.

To qualify for the Choice grade a carcass must possess the minimum requirements for evidences of quality regardless of the extent that its conformation may exceed the minimum requirements for Choice. However, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Choice grade may compensate, on an equal basis and without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Choice as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Choice grade may have conformation equivalent to the mid-point of the Good grade and remain eligible for Choice.

#### GOOD

A calf carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Good grade tends to be slightly blocky and compact and tends to be slightly broad in proportion to its length. It tends to be only slightly thick-fleshed and has a slightly plump appearance. Rounds are slightly thick but have little evidence of plumpness. Loin and back are very slightly full and plump. Shoulders and breast are slightly thick.

There is usually a very thin covering of fat over the loin and back which also partially covers the tops of the shoulders and outsides of the legs. There is a slight amount of feathering between the ribs, a slight quantity of fat streaking in the inside flank muscles,

and a slight amount of fat covering over the skirt. The flanks are moderately thick, full, and firm. There is usually a small amount of kidney and pelvic fat which is moderately firm. The cut surface of the lean is slightly soft, fine-textured, slightly dark grayish red in color, and somewhat moist to sight and touch.

A carcass that has conformation equivalent to at least the mid-point of the Good grade may have evidences of quality equivalent to the minimum for the upper third of the Standard grade and remain eligible for Good. Also, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Good grade may compensate, without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Good on the basis of a half grade superior quality for a third of a grade of deficient conformation as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Good grade may have conformation equivalent to the minimum of the upper third of the Standard grade and remain eligible for Good.

#### STANDARD

A calf carcass possessing typical minimum qualifications for the Standard grade tends to be thinly fleshed, rangy, and angular and tends to be narrow in relation to its length. Rounds are thin and tapering and very slightly concave. Loin and back are slightly shallow and depressed. Shoulders and breast are thin.

There is usually an extremely thin covering of fat over the back and loin but usually practically no fat covering over the tops of the shoulders or outsides of the legs. There are traces of feathering between the ribs, traces of fat streaking in the inside flank muscles, and traces of fat covering over the skirt. The flanks are slightly thick and firm. There is usually a slight amount of kidney and pelvic fat. The cut surface is moderately soft and moist and slightly dark grayish red in color.

A carcass that has conformation equivalent to at least the mid-point of the Standard grade may have evidences of quality equivalent to the minimum for the upper third of the Utility grade and remain eligible for Standard. Also, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Standard grade may compensate, without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Standard on the basis of a half grade superior quality for a third of a grade of deficient conformation as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Standard grade may have conformation equivalent to the minimum of the upper third of the Utility grade and remain eligible for Standard.

#### UTILITY

A calf carcass possessing typical minimum requirements for the Utility grade is very thinly fleshed and is very rangy and angular and very narrow in relation to its length. Rounds are very thin and moderately concave. Loin and back are very shallow and depressed. Shoulders and breast are very thin.

There are usually only a few very thin patches of external fat over the loin and back and very small deposits of fat around the base of the tail and over the outsides of the shoulders. There is practically no feathering, practically no fat streaking in the inside flank



muscles, and practically no fat covering over the skirt. The flanks are soft and very thin. There is usually only a very slight amount of kidney and pelvic fat. The cut surface of the lean is soft and moist and dark grayish red in color.

A carcass that has conformation equivalent to at least the mid-point of the Utility grade may have evidences of quality equivalent to the minimum for the upper third of the Cull grade and remain eligible for Utility. Also, a development of quality which is superior to that specified as minimum for the Utility grade may compensate, without limit, for a development of conformation which is inferior to that specified for Utility on the basis of a half grade superior quality for a third of a grade of deficient conformation as indicated in the following example: A carcass which has evidences of quality equivalent to the mid-point of the Utility grade may have conformation equivalent to the minimum of the upper third of the Cull grade and remain eligible for Utility.

#### CULL

A typical Cull grade calf carcass is extremely thin-fleshed and is extremely rangy and angular and extremely narrow in relation to its length. Rounds are concave and extremely thin. Loin and back are extremely depressed. Shoulders and breast are extremely thin.

There is usually no external fat covering and no feathering between the ribs, fat covering over the skirt, nor streaking of fat in the inside flank muscles. The flanks are extremely thin and very soft. There is usually practically no kidney or crotch fat. The cut surface of the lean is very soft and very moist and dark grayish red in color.

